

Salt River Fire Department Operating Guidelines

Salvage

April 2000

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This procedure describes guidelines for conducting salvage operations. Virtually every fire, small or large, produces a need for some form of salvage operations.

Salvage includes activities required to stop direct and indirect fire damage in addition to those required to minimize the effects of firefighting operations. This includes losses from water, smoke, and firefighting efforts.

Salvage operations must be aimed at aggressively controlling loss by the most expedient means.

Salvage objectives are:

- Stop or reduce the source of damage
- Protect or remove contents

Command will provide salvage at all fires or other incidents posing potential damage to property.

Salvage operations most often involve early smoke removal and covering building contents with salvage covers or plastic. In some cases, the contents of all threatened areas, where appropriate, can be removed to a safe location. When removal is not practical, contents should be grouped in the center of rooms, raised off of the floor and covered to provide maximum practical protection.

The following items should be considered when addressing salvage.

- Type, value and location of contents
- The extent and location of the fire
- Recognition of existing and potential damage sources
- Estimate of required resources

Extent and Location of Fire

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Salvage efforts should begin in areas most severely threatened by damage. In most cases that will be areas directly adjacent to or below the fire area. Additional salvage activities should expand outward until all areas of potential loss are secured.

Recognition of Existing and Potential Damage Sources

All firefighting activities have the potential to damage property and contents. The key to successful salvage is to distinguish between excessive damage, and damage that is required to reduce potential fire damage.

Aggressive loss control activities reduce the damage incurred during firefighting operations.

Type, Value and Location of Contents

Replacement price and value should be primary considerations when performing salvage operations. It is often difficult to separate value from price, however, salvage crews should weigh the worth (value) of items in addition to their dollar cost. Business records, for example, have extremely high value to business owners while their price represents only the paper they are printed on. Pictures, wall paintings, family mementos, etc., may have very high personal value to the property owner.

Estimate of Required Resource

An early request for manpower and salvage equipment can significantly reduce loss. The first company assigned to salvage should consider the size-up factors and request sufficient resources to stabilize the situation.

Salvage Equipment

Common salvage equipment includes salvage covers. Where salvage covers must be left on scene, arrangements should be made for pickup later. Command or the Fire Marshal should schedule a return walk through by the Fire Department to insure post-incident damage is not occurring.

Customer Service

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Command and/or the loss control officer should meet with the property owner or responsible party, to determine/identify the salvage priorities. The earlier this can be done, the greater the opportunity to identify high value/priority items or areas. In some cases, when safe to do so, allowing the property owner/occupant to be escorted through the building by Fire Department personnel can be of great assistance to the loss control operation.